

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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### **SOAK Up the Rain New Hampshire: Your Land. Your Water. Your Solution.**

As this bitter cold and snowy winter winds down, even the hardest of snow shovelers is anticipating the warmth of spring. We're starting our seeds, tapping our maple trees, and planning all of the ways that we'll soak up the sun once the mercury rises. In all the excitement and preparation of impending warm weather, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) encourages you to also think about how you might soak up the rain this summer season.

Soak Up the Rain New Hampshire (SOAK NH) is NHDES' newest outreach and assistance program with the goal of protecting and restoring clean water in the state's lakes, streams and coastal waters from the negative impacts of stormwater pollution. Among other elements, SOAK NH provides resources for homeowners and small businesses to install rain gardens, rain barrels and other stormwater practices to reduce stormwater runoff and pollution and encourage clean and healthy water.



#### **What is stormwater runoff?**

Stormwater runoff is water from rain or melting snow that doesn't soak into the ground. In forests, meadows or other natural areas, stormwater soaks into the ground and naturally filters through the soil. When forests and meadows are developed, they are replaced with neighborhoods, shopping centers and other areas that introduce impervious surfaces such as roofs, roads, parking lots and driveways. Impervious surfaces prevent rain or melting snow from soaking into the ground. This creates excess stormwater runoff and stormwater pollution.

#### **Why is stormwater runoff a problem?**

Over 90 percent of the water pollution problems in New Hampshire are caused by stormwater runoff. We often think of roads, big buildings, and parking lots as being the primary sources of stormwater runoff, but every single property, even our private homes, can contribute to runoff and pollution to nearby lakes and streams. Excess stormwater runoff and the pollutants that it carries can cause many different problems including flooding, erosion and water pollution. This can make the water unhealthy and unsafe for fish and other animals, including humans.

Throughout New Hampshire, neighbors are planting rain gardens, using rain barrels, planting trees, and finding other ways to Soak Up the Rain to protect and restore clean water in their local lakes, streams and estuaries. Since SOAK NH first got started in 2013, the program and its partners have soaked up an estimated 151,000 gallons of runoff and have prevented over 11,000 pounds of sediment, more than 3 pounds of phosphorus, and almost 7 pounds of nitrogen from polluting waterbodies across the state. This is a great accomplishment, but it's going to take a lot more work to solve the stormwater runoff problem and New Hampshire's lakes, streams and bays could sure use your help.

#### **How you can help Soak Up the Rain**

By installing a Do-It-Yourself stormwater practice such as a rain barrel or rain garden, you'll be collecting stormwater and encouraging it to soak into the ground. This helps the water on your property behave more like

it does in nature. It restores the natural water cycle and can help reduce local flooding, reduce pollutants like pet waste and excess lawn chemicals from washing into nearby lakes and streams, and recharge groundwater aquifers that provide drinking water.

If you think you might be interested in soaking up the rain on your property, consider the following:

**1. Look around your property and ask yourself a few questions:**

- Is there dirt, sand, sediment or other debris washing down to the road or to a waterbody?
- When it rains, does stormwater runoff leave your property and directly enter a waterbody?
- Does the runoff flow off your land into a stormwater collection system (e.g. storm drain, catch basin, or drainage swale)?

**2. If you answer yes to any of the above, consider installing a Do-It-Yourself stormwater practice**

Stormwater practices can be very simple, like a rain barrel that collects water from your roof, or more complex, like a rain garden. Step-by-step instructions for building nine different stormwater practices are described in the *New Hampshire Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater Management* available on the NHDES website. If you'd like to learn more, the Soak Up the Rain website at <http://soaknh.org/soak-project-steps/> can walk you through your project from start to finish.

**3. Share how you are Soaking Up the Rain**

If you decide to install a stormwater practice on your property, we'd love to hear about your experience. Send us an email with the details and photos of your project and we'll feature it on our SOAK Stories web page. We'll add it to the SOAK website map and send you a "Soak Up the Rain" tote bag as thanks for your good work.

**For More Information**

Visit the SOAK NH website at [www.soaknh.org](http://www.soaknh.org) to find much more information about how and why to Soak Up the Rain.

To speak to NHDES about this program, contact Jillian McCarthy at [jillian.mccarthy@des.nh.gov](mailto:jillian.mccarthy@des.nh.gov) and (603) 271-8475.

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